

tor and nurse that he had hidden four treasure chests in Lincoln County, West Virginia. "There are thousands of dollars in those chests," rasped the old peddler. "Go up the Big Ugly River until you reach the Laurel Fork branch. About a mile from the junction of the two creeks is a big rock." The location is near Leet, West Virginia.

A treasure enthusiast from Chapmanville, West Virginia, claims to have plucked a mason jar brimming with old coins from the river. "I'm convinced there is more in the river," he said.

#### *Wisconsin's Indian Outlaw Loot:*

In the early 1880's a group of Indian desperados slipped aboard a Mississippi River boat at Prairie du Chien and burglarized the purser's safe of an undetermined amount of gold, coins, and passenger's monies. Apprehended by lawmen, the Indians said they hid their loot in a cave high in the Coon Rock Bluffs near the town of Arena, in Iowa county. A search was launched for the loot. It was never recovered.

#### *Wyoming's Dead Bandit Treasure:*

A stagecoach bandit buried two strongboxes of gold bars and coins near old Fort Laramie. The treasure site is believed to be marked with an iron bar sticking up out of the earth. The bandit was captured, hanged, and the treasure was never found.

## TREASURE IN THE LOST PHAROAH'S CAVE

The deepening reds of a waning afternoon were cast across the forest as the son of a farmer near Ticonderago, New York, hastened toward his home. It was a rainy day in the early 1840's and Peter Johnson had spent the past few hours in exploring the land near his home. There was a warming caress in the night wind and the young man smiled as he felt a strange, blackened metallic disc strike the side of his hip.

The boy's father was out by the barn when the youth walked through the gate which led to his home. The boy skipped, then ran, toward the barn.

"Paw, look at what I found today," the young man said.

His father paused in his endless chores. He flung the last fork of musty hay to his cow and propped the pitchfork against the barn wall. "What is it?" he chided. "Another shiny rock or a gold mine?"

The boy handed the circular disc to his father. The tarnished object was thick, rubbed smooth on one side, and

etched on the other by an engraving of an elephantine creature.

"Where did you find it?"

The boy kicked his foot into the hardened clay floor of the barn. "I was playing in the woods with those two little Indian boys," he confessed. "It started to rain. In a couple of minutes, it was a regular thunderstorm. We were getting awful wet, so the boys led me into a cave. We stayed there until the storm quit. Paw, there was some drawings on the walls of the cave. Funny drawings. There were all kinds of these discs stored there. They were all over the floor, stacked in piles."

"What did I tell you about playing with those Indians?" the farmer demanded.

"You said not to do it."

"That's because those fellows are born to the woods," the farmer explained, gently. "You're just learning about such things. Pete, I want your promise that you won't go into any more caves with those Indian boys."

"Paw, I'm supposed to meet them tomorrow and we're going to visit the cave again," said Pete Johnson, a tremor in his voice, "Please, Paw . . ."

"No. There may be snakes in that place," his father said. "You might fall into a hole. You could break a leg, or hurt yourself in a dozen different ways."

"But I want to get some more of those round discs."

The farmer handed the metallic disc to his son. "This one ought to be enough to play with," he replied. "Now, get over to the house. Your mother baked a pie this afternoon."

Peter Johnson threw a handful of straw at the cow, then ran toward home. He laid the disc down on the back porch, forgetting the object as the fragrance of warm pie drifted out the kitchen door. Later, the boy carried the tarnished disc to his room, shoved the object under his bed, and promptly forgot about it.

Time passed and Peter Johnson's boyhood adventures were left behind as he assumed the responsibilities of be-

coming a man. Adventure is an emotional need for a boy, but when you stay in the same routine long enough, it seems as if any change can only be for the bad. He married, tilled the soil, listened to the complaints of his wife and delighted in the adventures of his own children. When they, too, had grown to manhood, Peter Johnson turned his affections to his grandchildren.

One evening the aging farmer dropped into his favorite rocking chair and pulled his grandson up on his lap. A warm fire blazed in the fireplace.

"Tell me another story," pleaded the boy. "Tell me about Indians."

Peter Johnson's mind ventured back to the afternoon in the cave with the two Indian boys. His memory was still good, and he could almost smell the liquid musk in the forest during that rainy afternoon.

"Now, just to prove to you that I'm not an old fogey, we'll look around here for that big round disc tomorrow," the old man promised. "However, I will only give it to you if you promise to never tell your dad and mother about it."

"Why?"

"Every boy should have a few secrets," the old man replied. "This will be yours."

"Can we go to the cave tomorrow?"

The old man pursed his lips. "Well, that cave was a very funny thing. I wanted to go back there once. But the Indians had moved away. I was unable to locate the entrance to the place."

"Where was it?"

"To the best of my recollection it was someplace upon what is now called Mt. Pharaoh," the old man said. "Maybe we can go out and look for it when you're older."

Years later, Richard Johnson had also grown to manhood, completed his studies at college and obtained a degree in geology. He was visiting on the family farm one weekend when workmen were demolishing the ancient

barn. A worker handed a black disc to the young man. "This dropped off a rafter," the carpenter said.

"My gosh, I'd forgotten all about it," said the young man. "My grandfather always said a boy should have something to put in a secret hiding place, and . . ."

Subconsciously, Johnson's mind had analyzed the disc. He dashed to his automobile and hurried home to test the metallic substance.

"Pure gold," he announced. "I'm going to have my former professor at college run another test."

Later, his professor's brow wrinkled in curiosity as he examined the disc. "Dick, it is gold," the professor said. "But it isn't like the gold mined here in America. This has a more reddish color. The ore was probably mined in Asia or eastern Europe."

The disc was also inspected by trained archeologists.

"This can't be the work of the Indian tribes in this region," Johnson was informed. "They didn't have the facilities to create such objects. The etching on the side of the disc is also very puzzling. The drawing appears to be that of a mastodon. These creatures were not found in Europe."

"How long have they been extinct?"

The archeologist looked at the disc again. "Well, it's been several thousand years since one of these fellows roared through the wilderness."

In the years since he discovered the mysterious disc was made of gold, with an unknown origin, Richard Johnson has explored Mt. Pharoah in search of the cave entrance. "I have been over every inch of the place. I can't find anything that resembles any sort of an entrance into a cave," he said. "I go back there every summer and look again. I believe that time, or some sort of earth change, may have hidden the entrance."

Richard Gurnee, a president of the National Speleological Society and an experienced cave explorer, has also searched for the lost cave. However, Gurnee believes the

entrance may be a half mile or more away from the mountain, due to limestone formations in the area.

Many residents of Ticonderoga are also intrigued by the thought of a treasure cave in the mountain. Depending on whom you are listening to, the cave contains millions in these valuable golden discs. Some whisper that the cave is the treasure vault of an ancient race, with gold and rare jewels waiting for some lucky finder. Richard Johnson and his academic friends are interested in the possible artifacts that might be brought out of the cave.

"Naturally, we're interested in treasure, but these items would be too valuable to melt down and sell for gold," Johnson related. "They may be the only remains of some ancient race that has been lost to history."

More than one group of treasure hunters have tried to locate the vast underground treasure vault. None to date has found the entrance and all have come away shaking their heads in deep frustration.